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6 May 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Intelligence Community Staff  
FROM: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence  
SUBJECT: Minimum Computer Security Standards

1. I would like you to develop <sup>//</sup>Community-coordinated minimum acceptable computer security standards. These would then be applied to any Community computer networks that we might develop. You might want to consider the DoD Computer Security Evaluation Center's criteria for computer security as a starting point.

2. Please advise how much time you think you will need to complete this effort.

[Redacted]  
[Redacted] ohn N. McMahon

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DCI/ICS 83-4383  
6 June 1983

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM:

Director, Intelligence Community Staff

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SUBJECT: Minimum Computer Security Standards

REFERENCE: Your Memorandum dated 6 May 1983; Same Subject

1. Minimum standards regarding computer security are probably the most difficult to determine. We need to balance a good understanding of the vulnerabilities and the threat coupled with some agreed upon tolerable level of "risk." We do not have the knowledge or experience to do so at the present time.

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2. Formal computer standards generally require five to seven years to develop, to coordinate, and to introduce effectively into the infrastructure. In general, technical criteria are relatively easy to prepare and even to reach agreement upon. Policy implications (turf), compliance auditing, and cost (whose budget) are issues that take longer.

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3. I suggest a dual approach which will provide rapid improvements and will permit early applications, along with a longer term effort. The imposition of standards is expensive and, if they are mandatory, will be even more costly. This dual approach equates to setting near-term action priorities with specific follow-through on supporting the associated costs, and in a more deliberate pace, to develop and coordinate the more broadly applicable standard or standards through the existing mechanism of the Computer Security Subcommittee of SECOM under the applicable DCIDs.

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4. An approach which appears practical and likely to reduce vulnerabilities of "critical" systems on a "fast-track" basis would be described as follows:

a. Identify those few critical systems which must meet a set of mandatory standards; for systems not designated as critical, impose the standards as voluntary for a transition period. This will allow budgets to "catch up" with the costs of imposed standards.

b. Specify a set of vulnerabilities which by any criteria generate the greatest threat and highest risk; develop, promulgate and impose mandatory standards that will reduce these high threat and risk areas to an acceptable threshold.

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7. If the basic approach outlined above is acceptable to you, then some first products could be off the drawing board in about 90 days. I would like to discuss this further with you and to include [redacted]  
[redacted] We will then proceed to get agreement from our newly formed ELINFOSEC Steering Group (ESG). [redacted]

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